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A Tortuous Trajectory: Nigerian Foreign Policy under Military Rule, 1985 – 1999

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Abstract

This article critically examined the complexities that abound in Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the final three military administrations of Generals Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha, and Abdulsalami Abubakar, before the transition to democratic rule in 1999. It adopted a novel approach by identifying and intricately examining a distinct pattern of contortion evinced in Nigeria's foreign policy during this epoch. It contended that although Nigeria's foreign policy had historically been somewhat knotty at varying points in time, this period in its foreign policy and external relations was especially marked by tortuousness and a somewhat back and forth agenda. This began in 1985 with the Babangida administration, whose foreign policy posture initially seemed commendable, only for political debacles to mar it. An exacerbation of this downslide in foreign policy occurred under the Abacha regime, whereby the country obtained pariah status among the comity of nations. Subsequently, a revitalisation occurred under General Abubakar, who deviated from what had become the status quo, reinventing Nigeria's external image and foreign policy position through his 'restoration campaign.' More so, following David Gray's behavioural theory of foreign policy, this study examined how the behavioural patterns and aspirations of a minuscule cadre of decision-makers deeply affected Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation during the period under study. The findings of this study include national interest, the crux of any foreign policy, sometimes misaligned with domestic realities. In this regard, this study demonstrated how successive Nigerian governments replicated a 'munificent', 'Santa Claus' foreign policy which alienated key local developments such as economic hardship, and contributed to the tortuousness that the country's foreign policy experienced during an era of military dictatorships in the late twentieth century. Through its findings, the study concluded by proffering recommendations to improve the country's foreign policy, better advance her national interests– which ought to comprise the crux of her foreign policy objectives, – and help in eschewing a recurrence of past ineptitudes and errors.

Key Words: Foreign policy, military rule, Nigeria, behavioural theory,

Introduction

Foreign policy, albeit having no general definition, can be expressed as the formulation of, and exertions towards implementing guidelines stipulated by a state for the maximisation of her variegated national interests in the process of extended relations within the international system. This aligns with Donald Nuechterlein's viewpoint that emphasizes the importance of national interest in its interconnectedness with foreign policy (Nuechterlein, 1976). More so, the critique of the notion of foreign policy has been of salience in scholarly discourses across the globe. What many agreed upon was that foreign policy is typically a reflection of the domestic realities of a given state. This has been typically in a bid to further the national interests of the said state in the process of interacting with other counterparts within the international system. While this pattern has not always been ubiquitous, it has been the common case.

In the words of a veteran foreign service official, Osuntokun (1998): "the foreign policy of any country at any given time is intricately related to its domestic politics. In fact, one cannot really separate foreign and domestic politics" (p. 5). This was typical of the Nigerian experience in the period under consideration, in which the country's foreign policy was in a state of flux. This study critically analysed the complexities that abound in Nigeria's foreign policy under the nation's final three military administrations of Generals Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, Sani Abacha, and Abdulsalami Abubakar, before the transition to democratic rule in 1999. It adopted a novel approach by identifying and intricately examining a distinct pattern of contortion evinced in the country's foreign policy during this epoch. The study contended that although Nigeria's foreign policy had historically been knotty at varying points in time, this particular period in her foreign policy and external relations was especially marked by tortuousness and a somewhat back and forth agenda. This began in 1985 with the Babangida administration, whose foreign policy posture initially seemed commendable, only to have been marred by political debacles. An exacerbation of this downslide in foreign policy occurred under the Abacha regime, whereby the country obtained pariah status among the comity of nations. Subsequently, revitalization occurred under General Abubakar, who deviated from what had become the status quo, re-establishing Nigeria's external image and foreign policy position through his 'restoration campaign.'

More so, in accordance with David Gray's Behavioural Theory of Foreign Policy, the study examined how the behavioural patterns and aspirations of a small cadre of decision-makers—as is typical with military regimes—deeply affected Nigeria's Foreign Policy formulation and implementation during the period under study (Gray, 1975). Through its findings, the study concluded by proffering recommendations to improve the country's foreign policy, better advance her national interests—which ought to comprise the crux of her foreign policy objectives, – and help in eschewing a recurrence of past ineptitudes and errors.

Foreign Policy and the Babangida Administration (1985-1993)

As regards Nigeria's foreign policy, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida in his 1986 speech at the Nigeria Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies declared that a new focus was required for the nation's foreign policy that would promote Nigeria's vital interest to the turn of the century and beyond. The period between August 1985 and January 1987 could be regarded as the gestation period of Babangida's far-reaching foreign policy initiatives in Nigeria. Within this period, several unresolved domestic and external issues inherited from the preceding

Buhari administration (1984-1985) created the premise upon which the Babangida administration contrived its foreign policy agenda.

One diplomatically difficult matter unresolved by the Buhari regime which the Babangida government took ample advantage of, was the South African question on the issue of apartheid (Onabrakpeya&Ikhuorinon, 1986). Nigeria was staunchly against the apartheid policy in South Africa where the ruling apartheid regime discriminated against people of colour. The aforementioned issues formed the prelude to his foreign policy initiatives from the inception of the regime in August 1985. During his first major speech to the Nation in August 1985, General Babangida berated the foreign policy of the preceding regime and gave clues as to the direction of his administration's foreign policy. He remarked that: 'Nigeria's foreign policy in the last 20 months has been characterized by inconsistency and incoherence. It has lacked the clarity to make us know where we stood on matters of international concern to enable other countries to relate to us with seriousness. Our role as Africa's spokesman has diminished because we have been unable to maintain the respect of African countries.' ("Text of General," 1985)

Within eight months of his administration, the regime embarked on deft diplomatic moves to reposition itself and reclaim the country's leadership role in Africa. In February 1986, for instance, the General Babangida-led government reopened the borders hitherto closed in 1984 by the Buhari regime (Salami, 2014). In another development in January 1986, Babangida made a move to normalize diplomatic relations with Britain which was strained under his predecessor.

Accordingly, the regime's pioneer initiative – championed by then Foreign Affairs Minister, Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi (1985-1987) – was the Concert of the Medium Powers. The principle behind the concert was to create a concert of medium power countries to act as a counterforce to the ideological dominance of the then great powers in the global system. Therefore, as a foreign policy initiative, the Concert of Medium Powers was articulated by the military administration in 1987, for meeting the objectives of giving a new burst of creativity to inform Nigeria's role in the global village. Nevertheless, it became evident that the practical success of the initiative would be called into question. A retired official of the Ministry of External Affairs, for instance, described the Concert of Medium Powers as '...an unrealistic initiative, in that its main aim went unfulfilled' (K. Olanrewaju, personal communication, August 12, 2016).

The Technical Aids Corps Scheme

The establishment of the Technical Aids Corps Scheme (TACS) by the Babangida administration marked a watershed in the Nigerian foreign policy during this epoch. It equally represented an innovative trend in the country's drive towards the efficient institutionalization of aid to needy sister African countries as well as Africans in the Diaspora (Salami, 2012). The programme allowed young Nigerian professionals, particularly in such fields as medicine and education, to be sent to work in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific countries (ACP) for two years to assist the host countries in their development needs. Accordingly, TACS shared in the general spirit of assistance as an instrument of Nigerian foreign policy since independence.

More so, TACS served as a response to prevailing domestic and external imperatives. At the domestic level, it responded partly to the need to cut down on monetary and material assistance to other countries, especially in light of the economic predicaments in Nigeria

during this period. The Babangida regime also designed it to address the problems of graduate unemployment in Nigeria by providing highly qualified Nigerian professionals with opportunities for gainful employment abroad. On the external front, TACS fitted well into the context of South-South cooperation as a way for promoting African and Third World Development. In addition, the initiative promoted the image and prestige of Nigeria abroad. These impacts were reiterated by General Babangida, who posited that the scheme had “elicited a positive response not only from African countries but also from countries of the black dispersion as far away as Fiji, Guyana, and Jamaica.” Based on the scheme’s success, Babangida then asked a rhetorical question: “What more evidence do we need that fellow blacks do not perceive us as ugly Nigerians?” (Babangida, 1986). No wonder why a foreign policy analyst described the scheme as “the most enduring foreign policy instrument of the Babangida administration.” (Okunlola, O., Personal communication, July 23, 2016).

Salient Highlights on Economic Diplomacy

Interestingly, the Babangida regime introduced a novel foreign-policy thrust in the area of economic development and foreign direct investment (FDI), anchored on ‘economic diplomacy’. The prioritization of economic diplomacy by the Babangida regime was indeed a deviation from orthodoxy, in that it was not akin to Nigeria’s foreign policy historic focus on political matters. Its newfound policy objectives, such as the promotion of export trade, foreign direct investment and increased financial assistance from friendly countries, was reiterated by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Ike Nwachukwu, who stated that: ‘It is the responsibility of our foreign policy apparatus to advance the course of our national economic recovery’ (Nwachukwu, 1988; Omowunmi, 1986). This was in recognition of the economic challenges faced by the nation during this era.

‘Peacekeeping’ in Africa

Nigeria’s resolve to assert her position in the international community did not stop with the Concert of Medium Powers. The country also started a policy of constructive engagement in peacemaking and peacebuilding, particularly at the regional level. The policy of constructive engagement manifested in Nigeria’s crucial involvement in peace-making efforts between Ivory Coast and Senegal (1986), Togo and Ghana (1987), and historic participation in UN and OAU peacekeeping missions (Nuhu, 2014).

Beginning from the West-African sub-region, Babangida attempted to re-assert the Nigerian leadership position through the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) structure. He laid this bare in 1985 to a cheering circle of ECOWAS member-states that ‘ECOWAS was ripe for rebirth’ (“Nigeria’s foreign policy,” 1986). General Babangida granted donations and foreign aid while resorting to interpersonal diplomacy with heads of states in West Africa. Furthermore, the regime effectively rallied support for the formation of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990, a force that spearheaded peacekeeping operations in conflicted Liberia and Sierra Leone (Falola & Oyebade, 2010). The pivotal role of Nigeria in the ECOMOG enterprise earned her a pride of place in West African affairs. This was affirmed by Major-General Nwachukwu, who stated that ‘Nigeria [was] in the vanguard of the movement to reinvigorate the Economic Community of West African States’ (Nwachukwu, 1989).

Aid and Foreign Policy in the Babangida Government

Financial assistance – also described as ‘rescue operations’ – to various countries comprised another key facet of General Babangida’s foreign policy objectives. Recipient countries were

inclusive of Benin Republic, Zimbabwe, Barbados, and the Bahamas, among others. As part of the country's cardinal objectives of the political liberation of Africa, greater emphasis was given to economic assistance during the Babangida years. In 1986, after bombing raids carried by the apartheid South African government's Air Force on Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, the Nigerian government donated some \$60 million to anti-apartheid groups between 1986 and 1988. Three years later, in 1989, the regime launched a special fund of \$1.5 million to assist the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO), to campaign for independence elections in Namibia (Adegunrin, 2001). Similarly, from 1988-1990, the Nigerian government provided several grants to the neighbouring country of Equatorial Guinea, including a grant of \$5million. Numerous other examples abound during the Babangida years.

These enormous financial commitments, albeit being connected with the foreign policy posture of the government, failed to have profound effects in advancing the national interests of the Nigerian state. Suffice to say, therefore, that this was another glaring example of the 'Santa Claus' approach that had come to characterize Nigeria's foreign policy since independence – what Akinyeye (2014) delineated as 'clothing others while naked.' These enormous aid packages were somewhat misplaced in lieu of the fact that Nigeria was in a state of economic hardship during this period. The table below reveals a significant low of Nigeria's GDP in comparative terms with the US, and neighbouring Cameroun – who possessed lesser resources and economic potentials:

GDP per Capita (US\$)

Country	1975	1980	1985	1990	1998
Nigeria	301	314	230	258	256
United States	19,364	21,529	23,200	25,363	29,683
Cameroon	616	730	990	764	646

Note. *Human Development Report 2000* (United Nations, 2000).

Accordingly, the Nigerian government could have redirected such monies to pacify the country's economic woes or granted them to these foreign counterparts with some clauses that would be economically beneficial to Nigeria. Nonetheless, the country's 'historic altruism' and quest to 'lead' the African continent seem to have accounted for this nonreciprocal approach.

Elections Annulment, Human Rights Abuses and Foreign Consequences

Perhaps General Babangida's foreign policy achievements would have had a complete and enduring legacy if not for the demeaning turn of events that occurred towards the twilight of his administration. This was notably, the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential elections, human rights violations and disregard for international laws. In so doing, Babangida truncated his own democratic transition program, incurring the resentment of the international community, which had dire external consequences for Nigeria (Chibundu, 2004). Retrospectively, one can argue that this marked the beginning of the misfortunes in the country's foreign relations that would last until the next two succeeding military

administrations. In the words of a foreign policy expert: 'the Babangida administration thus became the case of a sweet story gone sour that negatively reflected on Nigeria's foreign relations' (J. Bolarinwa, Personal communication, June 16, 2016). Later in 1993, Babangida bowed to pressure and ceded power to an interim national government, led by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy under General Sanni Abacha (November 1993 – June 1998)

General Sanni Abacha assumed power following the overthrow of the ephemeral and widely perceived as illegitimate, Interim National Government (IGN) in a palace coup d'état in November 1993. In reality, General Abacha's regime largely operated a disarticulated foreign policy which damaged Nigeria's international image and resulted in some dreadful consequences for the nation (Fawole, 1999). This lapse in foreign policy approach was expressed by notable international relations experts. For instance, Akinjide Osuntokun, an erstwhile diplomat and scholar, described Nigeria's foreign policy under Abacha with the derogatory term of 'area boy diplomacy' (Ajanaku, 1998). Another scholar, Kolawole (2005) asserted that the General Abacha administration represented the 'dark years of Nigeria's foreign policy as the period witnessed the squandering of all the gains since 1960' (p. 873).

In a 1993 speech on foreign policy at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, General Abacha discussed cogent Nigerian foreign policy issues. On regional security, he stated that:

Our commitment to peace and stability in Africa is demonstrated by our going involvement in several peacekeeping operations. These include our role in the ECOWAS Monitoring Group in Liberia, OAU Natural Military Observer Group in Rwanda, the United Nations Verification in Angola, United Nations Observer Mission in Somalia, and United Nations Observer Mission in Western Sahara (Abacha, 1993, p. 6).

The same optimism was expressed in this address, as regards Nigeria's economy, where he proclaimed that his administration would 'take effective measures to restore confidence in the economy' (p. 8).

Nevertheless, the reality reflected a different scenario, as many of his controversial administrative actions diverged from the commitments he made, especially regarding Nigeria's economy and prestige among the comity of nations. These controversies were as regards specific issues that dominated the nation's foreign policy under General Abacha.

Regime Policies and Foreign Implications

One of such controversial issues that attracted negative foreign consequences for Nigeria was the arrest and incarceration of Chief M.K.O. Abiola – the widely acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential elections, annulled by the Babangida regime. This annulment led to a steady crisis that attracted international concern. The Abacha junta's Caesarean tendencies hindered a relinquishing of power despite intense pressure to do so. This inspired drastic measures from Abiola (1994), who publicly declared himself President on June 11, 1994, stating that: 'appeals to their honour as officers and gentlemen of the gallant Nigerian armed forces have fallen on deaf ears' (p. 1). Shortly after, the regime arrested Abiola and charged him with treason. More importantly, the regime, in variance with customary laws, held him in detention without trial. It became evident that this administration was lacking diplomatic intelligence, a deficiency that proved fatal to Nigeria's foreign policy and external interests. Indeed, the diplomatic consequences were abysmal as Nigeria's foreign prestige

further plunked. It was arguably from this moment that Nigeria under the Abacha regime lost the support of other friendly nations and began the journey to pariah status. More so, the regime's explicit abuse and blatant disregard for international laws on human rights worsened this situation, especially in a period when human rights had become a subject of global concern.

Another blunder that negatively impacted Nigeria's foreign relations during the Abacha regime was the prosecution of numerous persons in connection with an alleged coup plot in March 1995. The regime implicated many prominent figures in this plot, including General Olusegun Obasanjo, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, Dr. Boko Ransome-Kuti, among others. These individuals were arraigned before a military tribunal headed by Major-General Patrick Aziza, who proclaimed all to be guilty. Accordingly, all the accused – save for General Obasanjo who bagged a 25-year jail term – were sentenced to death by firing squad. This action provoked the disbelief and condemnation of the international community who believed the coup plot to be an imaginative tool used by the regime to silence its perceived political enemies. In fact, soon after his release from jail some years after, Obasanjo (1998) stressed that this façade of a coup plot was orchestrated at the behest of General Abacha and '...was parcelled out like wrapped presents on July 14, 1995, to some citizens of this country who were seen as vocally too dangerous or uncompromising' (p. 32).

The implications of this saga on Nigeria's foreign relations were calamitous. In response to both domestic and foreign outcry, the international community took stern action against the Abacha regime and by extension, Nigeria. Sanctions were levied against the country, even as condemnations trounded in from various world leaders, international organisations, and civil society groups. For instance, TransAfrica, a United States-based lobbyist group, rallied fifty-five prominent African Americans such as Congressmen, Mayors, activists, and the like, to send a strongly-worded open letter to General Abacha imploring him to do restore democracy in Nigeria. They further stressed that: 'to do less will result in incalculable damage to Africa's most populous nation and the eventual global economic and political isolation of Nigeria.' (TransAfrica, 1995).

Furthermore, another incident that negatively affected the foreign policy of the Abacha administration was the execution of nine environmental activists from Ogoni land – a part of the Niger Delta area of Nigeria – on 10 November 1995. Led by world-renowned poet and scholar, Ken SaroWiwa, these activists, popularly referred to as 'the 'Ogoni Nine,' had protested the environmental pollution caused by the exploration of petroleum products by some oil companies in the region. Instead of tackling these prevalent issues, General Abacha opted for the opposite and labelled these activists as rebels. They were hereafter tried for a flimsy charge and executed, despite pleas from prominent global figures (such as from Nelson Mandela, then president of the Republic of South Africa) to the Abacha government. This attracted severe condemnation from the international neighbourhood towards then Foreign Minister, Chief Tom Ikimi, and the Abacha government at large. This was so much so that Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations irrespective of the fact that Chief Emeka Anyaoku, a notable Nigerian, was the organisation's Secretary-General at the time ("Commonwealth suspends Nigeria," 1995). Surely, this period proved to be immensely detrimental to Nigeria's foreign image and prestige among the comity of nations. No wonder a veteran official of the Commonwealth declared this 'the ugliest moment of Nigeria's foreign policy' (N. Amaka, personal communication, July 28, 2016).

More so, another consequence manifested in the form of political and economic sanctions levied against Nigeria by foreign governments. For instance, the United States of America (U.S.) levied some economic sanctions against Nigeria and even revoked the visas of some of the country's top military officials. Notwithstanding, there were more severe economic sanctions that the U.S. was in a position to impose on Nigeria, especially regarding crude oil production and international trade. Despite making several threats to impose these sanctions, the U.S. never gave them fruition owing to concern for the negative implications it will have on her own economic interests and on the multinational oil corporations operating in Nigeria. This explains the position of a foreign policy scholar, who submitted that: 'the United States and her actions to curtail the excesses of the Abacha regime was in fact, an instance of a toothless bulldog' (F. Agwu, personal communication, June 29, 2016). In any case, the reality seemed to be that the U.S. may have done as much as possible within the confines of protecting her own national interests. This had historically characterised her approach to developments in the Third World (Lawrence, 2011).

Furthermore, Nigeria's foreign policy under the Abacha government was so appalling that for its duration, most countries of the world distanced themselves from the regime. Moreover, the inability of the Abacha regime to conduct a transparent democratic exercise presented another major issue that adversely affected the country's foreign policy in this era. Consequently, a United Nations fact-finding mission visited Nigeria in March 1996 to execute a first-hand observation of the occurrences in the country and left disenchanted ("Report on UN Fact-Finding," 1996). The largely isolationist and pariah nature assumed by the Abacha government, and its incapacity to reach an agreement with multilateral credit institutions – such as the World Bank – had damaging consequences for Nigeria's national interests.

Regional Conflict Management

One arguably positive aspect of Nigeria's foreign policy under General Sani Abacha involved the role the country played as regards conflict management in the West African sub-region. This role was mainly through the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, of which Nigeria had hitherto established a pivotal role in, before the advent of the Abacha regime. Nevertheless, the regime continued this legacy and furthered Nigeria's participation in the sub-regional efforts to bring stability to the war-torn nations. The rationale as to why this was so has been a contentious issue in historical scholarship. While many scholars are agreed that the traditional roles played by Nigeria in regional security served as a cogent reason, this study further argues that the self-serving motives of the regime may have also been at play. This is in the sense that Nigeria's continued involvement in ECOMOG may have been an attempt by General Abacha to garner goodwill, support and some sort of legitimacy for his government. The testimony of a former senior official in the Abacha regime substantiated this claim: 'the General was not always an isolationist; he also desired acceptance and support for his government from the international community and at times, tried to achieve this. ECOMOG was one example. It was unfortunate things turned out differently' (anonymous, personal communication, July 5, 2016).

Also, these peacekeeping actions were in accordance with Nigeria's conventional foreign policy objective that stability was imperative for the effective economic integration of West Africa. In all, an international relations scholar described this sub-regional role played by Nigeria as: 'Arguably the only case of quality foreign policy thrust exhibited by the Abacha administration' (A. Adeleke, personal communication, August 14, 2016).

General Abubakar and the Revitalisation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy (June 1998 – May 1999)

Following the sudden demise of General Sanni Abacha on June 8, 1998, the mantle of power fell to General Abdulsalami Abubakar, whose tenure lasted till May 1999 (“Abacha dies,” 1998). Unlike his predecessor, General Abubakar had no ambitions to rule the country continuously. Soon after assuming office, he accordingly commenced the process of democratisation by instituting a transitional programme, much to the admiration of the global community. The Abubakar administration thus adopted a ‘correctionist’ foreign policy. This is in the sense that the Abubakar regime took a fresh dimension and sought to rectify the immense damage done to Nigeria’s foreign policy and relations, by the previous regime.

More so, dissimilar to his predecessor, General Abubakar adopted a policy of continuous dialogue with other world nations, especially the west. Initially faced with suspicion as a result of the legacies of past military regimes, the General in due time earned goodwill from the international community and convinced sceptics that he was indeed committed to transitioning to democratic rule. This was exemplified in his public address, stating: ‘I wish to stress that this administration has no desire whatsoever to succeed itself and is steadfastly committed to an expeditious hand-over to a democratically-elected government’ (Abubakar, 1998).

In no time, General Abubakar embarked on an agenda to reassert Nigeria’s position among the comity of nations. He stated that his regime was “on a mission to remedy the ills done to Nigeria’s image and prestige’ (Abubakar, 1998). Accordingly, he attended a number of international gatherings and embarked on state visits to many notable nations that would never have welcomed his predecessor on their shores. In September 1997, for instance, General Abubakar equally visited the United States of America to attend the 52nd session of the United Nations in New York where he met with U.S. President, Bill Clinton.

Similarly, many other world leaders welcomed Abubakar to their countries. About a year later, in 1998, General Abubakar attended the 12th Summit of the non-aligned movement hosted by Nelson Mandela’s South Africa. In that same year, he paid a state visit to the United Kingdom and held talks with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. He also met with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, to discuss the re-admittance of Nigeria into the Commonwealth of Nations. These activities substantiated the claim of a foreign policy scholar who described this era as ‘the age of redemption for Nigeria’s foreign relations’ (S. Akinboye, personal communication, June 14, 2016).

In addition, General Abubakar took a different turn from the policies of his predecessor by releasing unjustly incarcerated political prisoners such as General Obasanjo (Chibundu, 2004). General Abubakar equally revoked some of the oppressive decrees initiated during the Abacha regime. The consequences of these actions were immensely positive for Nigeria’s external relations. Nonetheless, it was also expected that the acclaimed winner of the annulled June 12 presidential elections, Chief M.K.O Abiola would be similarly released. However, Abiola’s controversial demise after a meeting with some top-level U.S. officials such as the Under-Secretary of State, Thomas Pickering, marred these expectations. It became apparent after his sudden death that these meetings were in a bid to persuade Chief Abiola to give up his claim to validate his June 12, 1993, electoral mandate (Fawole, 2003). Chief Abiola’s demise was met with wide-scale protests and riots that seemed to be capable of destroying the transition programme. Nevertheless, the regime handled this complex issue tactfully and

cautiously, partly thanks to the support of other countries who wanted the success of the transition programme and resultant return to civilian rule.

Another action of General Abubakar as regards Nigeria's foreign policy that favoured the nations' external relations was his appointment of Ignatius Ollisemeka as the Foreign Affairs Minister. Ollisemeka was a seasoned, experienced, and well-respected diplomat who tremendously aided in correcting the diplomatic ills done by the previous regime on Nigeria's foreign relations. This was in the sense that those at the helm of foreign affairs under the previous regime, notably Tom Ikimi (Abacha's top diplomat), lacked diplomatic finesse and operated 'abusive diplomacy'. This, in turn, resulted in the perpetuation of all manner of blunders that had negative effects on Nigeria's external relations. With a wide array of connections made over the many diplomatic missions he had served abroad, Ollisemeka applied diplomatic expertise and was gradually able to redeem Nigeria's image and restore friendly relations with many countries that had hitherto severed diplomatic ties with Nigeria.

Nigeria and Sub-Regional Relations

More so, General Abubakar furthered Nigeria's involvement in conflict management and peace-making in the West African sub-region, especially in Sierra Leone. Nigerians troops comprised the bulk of the ECOMOG force that reinstated the Sierra-Leonean government of Ahmed Kabbah and attempted to maintain democracy in the country. The importance of the Nigerian troops was far-reaching to the extent that the Sierra Leonian president appointed a Nigerian Brigadier-General, Maxwell Khobe, as his Chief of Defence Staff. Notwithstanding, because of pressing domestic circumstances, such as waning local support for the military expedition coupled with other economic challenges, General Abubakar sought to withdraw Nigerian troops from Sierra Leone. This would have provided another avenue for the deposition of the Kabbah government by the RUF rebels, which would be unacceptable to the global community. In view of this, a peace accord was negotiated between the government and the rebel forces, enabling the intervention of the United Nations (United Nations, 2005).

Conclusion

This article has analysed Nigeria's foreign policy under the military regimes from 1985-1999, particularly focusing on the distinct pattern of tortuosity reflected in the country's foreign policy during this era. One dimension this study made quintessentially glaring was the role of behavioural patterns in profoundly affecting Nigeria's foreign policy during the regimes under study. Here, it addressed the polar roles of General Babangida and others such as Bolaji Akinyemi and Ike Nwachukwu, in the innovations and misfortunes in foreign policy during his tenure. It went further to assess General Abacha, Tom Ikimi, among others, and how they exacerbated Nigeria's foreign policy, driving the country into pariah status. It then concluded with an appraisal of the adroitness of General Abubakar, Ignatius Ollisemeka, and so on, in performing the herculean task of reversing the nation's foreign policy mishaps with impressive timing. These assessments synergize with David Macdonald Gray's behavioural theory of foreign policy, the object of which was to test the applicability of behavioural analysis to public policy in domestic politics and foreign affairs.

In addition, the study made evident avenues in which foreign policy formulation and implementation could have been improved in Nigeria. For one, the notion of national interest required continuous evaluation and articulation, to ensure an effective synchronisation with domestic realities. In other words, national interests can neither be innate nor rigidly inherited from past legacies but ought to be truly reflective of local developments. Accordingly, the

advancement of said interests should form the crux of the country's foreign policy formulation and implementation. In this wise, the 'Santa Claus' munificent approach that has come to characterise Nigeria's foreign policy needs a re-evaluation in order to efficiently advance her national interests in the international system. Finally, the experiential training of foreign policymakers in Nigeria must be a continuum, to aid effectiveness in the sector.

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